

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Chairman Mary Nichols  
California Air Resources Board  
1001 "I" Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairman Nichols,

We know that you are familiar with the great work RCDs are doing throughout the State. On behalf of the 99 Resource Conservation Districts in the State of California, we find it imperative that investments of AB 32 revenues be made in farmland preservation, watershed protection, and natural resource conservation. We make specific recommendations below of programs that can benefit job creation, greenhouse gas reduction, avoidance of future greenhouse gas creation, and will provide multiple other benefits including habitat, clean water, strong rural communities, and resilient food systems. While transportation reduction is an important goal, augmenting that spending with the programs enumerated in this letter will bring a greater net benefit to the State of California by providing both direct greenhouse gas reduction and secondary benefits for a cleaner, stronger, more livable California.

In addition, we recommend that Resource Conservation Districts are the correct implementing body for many of these programs. As the local hub of State-level conservation programs and local communities, RCDs provide a critical link in connecting landowners and local actors to the overarching goals identified in AB 32. We have the resources, expertise, statutory authority under Division 9 of the Public Resources Code and connection with the landowner that is necessary to create meaningful, quantifiable, accountable and lasting change. This type of buy in is essential to creating a long term response to California's pressing GHG reduction needs.

**1) Conserve working lands including farmland, forests, and range.**

Conserving lands from urban development reduces the total vehicle miles traveled, creates lands that serve as sinks for carbon in plant and soils, and creates strong rural economies that serve as the backbone for California's economy.

*Programs to invest in include:*

California Farmland Conservation Program housed in the Department of Conservation  
Williamson Act Subvention Funds  
Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program housed in the Department of Conservation  
Resource Conservation Districts for *on-the-ground* conservation projects

**2) Conserve wildlands, parks and natural areas**

Conserving properly managed wildlands creates carbon sinks in plants and soils while providing for the natural heritage that makes California unique.

*Programs to invest in include:*

The Wildlife Conservation Board



Department of Fish and Game easement programs  
Resource Conservation Districts for *on-the-ground* conservation projects

**3) Provide stewardship of California’s watersheds**

Watershed protection is vital to creating a resilient, healthy water supply, preserving carbon sinks in protecting wetland corridors and other natural features, building wide spread support and networks for GHG reduction, reducing agricultural and residential water use and thus energy use, avoiding soil loss (thus creating carbon sinks), providing habitat for California’s wildlife and building the natural and rural character of California.

*Programs to invest in include:*

We make a strong recommendation to support the Statewide Watershed Program and the Resource Conservation District Assistance Program both housed in the Department of Conservation. The programs support natural resource conservation projects implemented in coordination with landowners within targeted watersheds in the state. The Statewide Watershed Program funds watershed coordinators and on-the-ground, conservation projects that provide tangible and significant natural resource conservation benefits. The Resource Conservation District Assistance Program offers technical and financial assistance to Resource Conservation Districts to support their land stewardship work with local landowners. Both programs can be scaled up to target projects statewide to reduce GHG emissions and sequester carbon.

Other programs that support landowner assistance in ways that would help reduce GHG emissions:  
Fertilizer Research Enhancement Program in the Department of Food and Agriculture

AB 32 marks a significant change in California’s response to the collective challenges we face. It is essential that we answer those challenges in a thoughtful, holistic, well-rounded way in order to guide the future of our State. An emphasis on multiple benefits, thoughtful consideration of total impact, and a commitment to strong rural economies and the preservation of California’s unique natural resources will serve as strong guiding principles for the future of California.

Thank You,

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